

# NOVEL

## ガーリッシュ ナンバー

著:渡 舟

キャラクター原案・屏絵:QP:flapper

挿絵:やむ茶

乃木  
若葉は  
勇者で  
ある

企画原案・シリーズ構成:タカヒロ(みなとそふと)

執筆:朱白あおい イラスト:BUNBUN 監修:Project 2H

MASSA RECORD DEPARTMENT • AIRFO-SAMA

**CENSORED**

Hero Record

# 第十一話

種子

乃木若葉は  
勇者である

vol.11

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Supervision by Project 2H



企画原案・シリーズ構成／  
**タカヒロ** (みなどとふと)

執筆／朱白あおい

イラスト／BUNBUN

パーティックスデザイン／D.K&JWWORKS

監修／Project 2H

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--Wakaba closed the diary after she had read it.

Her hands were shaking. Rage and helplessness stormed in her heart.

The other girls surrounded Wakaba and peeked into the diary. Various expressions arose on their faces... sadness, fear, rage, anxiety.

-"Wakaba-chan..."

Hinata peered into Wakaba's face in concern.

-"... It's okay, Hinata."

Wakaba shook her head and tried to console Hinata, but was unsure if she could pretend as if everything were indeed okay.

Wakaba walked up to the pile of corpses in the fountain and placed the diary softly beside it. She then silently placed her hands together while ruminating over the contents of the diary--

Some day in 2015.

How many days has it been since we've hid ourselves underground? My smartphone battery has died long ago, and I have no way of checking the date.

Some people have hoarded the batteries and mobile chargers that were in the underground shopping mall stores, so we can't use them. That said, even if we could use our smartphones, the airwaves seem to be dead, so they'd be pretty much useless outside of checking the time and date.

Anyway, at this rate, we'll forget our sense of time. So to prevent that from happening, I decided to start keeping a diary today. Besides, once we're rescued, there might be some value in having some kind of record of the days we spent here.

Some day in 2015.

I think for now, we should sort through our current situation.

Thanks to those monsters that appeared out of the sky in July, the town we lived is now in shambles. Tons of people died. Mom and Dad too...

My younger sister and I barely escaped with our lives and took refuge in the Umeda underground mall. Many other people had taken refuge there too. All of the exits have been barricaded, so those monsters can't get in.

We've been hiding in the underground mall ever since. No idea how it is on the surface. I wonder if my high school friends are safe. It frightens me just thinking about it.

Some day in 2015.

A fight broke out again today. A fight seems to break out among the underground mall dwellers just about every day. There are several causes. Scrambling over rations. Minor disagreements. Simple harassment of weaker people...

Some adults with strong senses of justice created rules to protect the young, the elderly, and the women. They also set up a system to fairly distribute rations. Without those people, we probably wouldn't be alive right now.

Some day in 2015.

It seems someone died in a fight that broke out today.

We all came here to escape the monsters, and yet now we have a casualty caused by human conflict. It's ridiculous!

But deadly conflicts are happening again and again. It's decreased after the adults set up the rules, but back when the barricades were just getting set up, it was really horrible. Since food is limited, some ruffians try to use violence to hoard it all to themselves.

Right before my eyes, a woman was killed with her infant still in her arms. And all she wanted was milk for her baby!

The corpses of the dead are gathered in a designated area. Leaving them where they died would be both a hygienic and mental nightmare, after all. Ahh, it's like I'm writing about corpses as inhuman objects, huh.

Maybe my senses have started going crazy too.

Some day in 2015.

My little sister burst into tears. She kept crying that she wanted to go home.

She's normally a calm and selfless child, but I guess she's reached her limit. An adult got irritated at her crying and told me to kill her or put her outside. But the exits are barricaded, so we can't get out. If we lifted the barricade, the monsters would all flood in.

Some day in 2015.

I feel like we've been in this underground mall for ages.

Food supply shortages are becoming a problem. Since no new food is coming in, the supply's just depleting.

The adults talked and two options came up: kill the sick and elderly to reduce the number of mouths, or lift the barricade and search for food. But in the end, no conclusion was reached, it seems.

Some day in 2015.

For food today, we had two dietary supplement blocks and half a bag of snack sweets. Not for one meal, but for the entire day! Looks like the food supply shortage was worse than I thought.

The adults have been discussing how to handle the food supply shortage since yesterday.

Some people say that since the sick and elderly won't live long, we should just hurry up and kill them anyway to save on food. Obviously, though, most people aren't on board. Me neither.

Some people say that we should lift the barricade and go outside. They say that since a long time has passed, perhaps the monsters are already gone. But since nobody knows if the surface is really safe or not, many people are against the notion.

In the end, no conclusion was reached today either.



Some day in 2015.

My little sister's not doing well. She hasn't gotten up since morning. She responds when I call to her, but she seems out of it.

She might be sick with something. But I don't know what.

There was a doctor among the people who took refuge in the underground mall, so I had her examined, but since the doctor had no examination tools, it seems we can't know the specifics of her illness.

We had her take some basic nutrients from a drug store. There was not much else we could do for her.

Some day in 2015.

My little sister's still not doing well today. Things could get bad if this keeps up.

But there's nothing I can do.

Some day in 2015.

I need to get her to a hospital...

Some day in 2015.

My little sister's not responding. What do I do what do I do

Some day in 2015.

A horrible fight broke out.

The people advocating to kill to save on food have unilaterally begun to do just that. They killed several sick and elderly.

They killed my little sister too. I won't forgive them!! I won't forgive them!! I won't forgive them!!

But the diehards who started the killing soon found themselves killed by the opposing faction.

Nothing makes any sense! Why can't we all cooperate!? We'll all be dead at this rate!

My little sister was carried to the corpse pile by the fountain.

Maybe I should just die already too.

Some day in 2015.

It's been a while since I last opened this diary. After my little sister died, I just hadn't ever felt like doing anything, so I didn't write anything.

The underground mall population has decreased significantly as well. Many died in the conflict that claimed my little sister, and the conflict didn't end there. Many also died of illness or suicide.

But even with fewer mouths to feed, there's still too little food to feed them with.

Some day in 2015.

Another fight broke out. Between those that advocated leaving to the surface and those opposed. I really don't care either way. I don't care.

After all, there might not have even been a point in locking ourselves in here. Just a choice of death at the hands of humans or death by the jaws of monsters.

If we were just going to end up killing each other, it would've been better if the monsters just killed us from the start instead.

Some day in 2015.

The people advocating leaving to the surface unilaterally destroyed a barricade. It's the same pattern as before. Nothing more can be done.

The monsters were still on the surface. They rushed in one after another through the destroyed barricade. No matter how many fire prevention shutters we lock, no matter how many tables and chairs we pile up, those monsters tear through them like it's nothing.

I'm sure if they ever thought about it, they could've just eaten through the barricade from the start and annihilated all the people underground all at once. But perhaps they prioritized destroying the surface. Or perhaps they knew that all they had to do was wait and the underground refugees would annihilate themselves through unsightly conflict.

I am now at the corpse pile.

I wanted to see my little sister one last time.



- "So this... is how it ended..."

Wakaba muttered before the mountain of corpses.

Even in the depths of despair, cornered by the Vertexes, people tried to survive. If even one hero were among those in the underground mall, perhaps the situation would've been different.

(If only I were there... maybe I could've saved them...)

Though she knew there was nothing she could do about it now, bitterness stung Wakaba's heart.

The very next moment, from the darkness beyond the passageway, a heavy thud and a grinding noise could be heard.

- "Vertexes...!?"

Nothing else could have conceivably appeared in a place like that.

Wakaba firmly gripped the handle of her sword. Rage towards the monsters boiled through her body. But she did not lose her composure.

- "... There are no more survivors in this underground mall. Let's escape on the double! Hinata, don't leave my side!"

As she shouted that order to her friends, Wakaba unsheathed her sword. The other heroes drew their weapons in succession as well.

And at the same time, giant white monsters appeared out from the underground passage.

Wakaba stood at the helm, felling Vertexes while making way to the surface. She had already had a general idea of the underground mall's layout in her head. Without any hesitation holding her back, she kept pressing forward.

In the meantime, as Chikage slayed the monsters with her scythe, she recalled the contents of the diary. While the contents had filled Wakaba with rage towards the Vertexes, they provided Chikage with a different emotion.

Rather than rage towards the Vertexes, what Chikage felt was the powerlessness, the shame, the misery of the cornered people.

The people who, with neither the power nor the courage to oppose the Vertexes, had no choice but to shut themselves away in the dark and spend their final days in fear.

When faced with a force too fierce to fight, the weak are left with nothing to fight but each other.

In the end, no matter how critical the situation, humans are unable to cooperate from the bottom of their hearts.

And--

To her, the underground mall community seemed like a microcosm of the eventual fate awaiting Shikoku.

People were shut in the small world they called Shikoku.

The situation was stable right now, but if a more critical situation were to arise-- the people of Shikoku would surely begin unsightly conflict like the people of the underground mall. Driven into a corner, they would steal from each other, wound each other, and reach an ending deprived of their dignity as human beings.

(... won't end like that...!)

Swinging her scythe, mowing down the monsters, Chikage glared through the darkness of the underground passage.

(... have the power of a hero...! Such a miserable death is the last thing I want...! I will live... respected as a hero... until the very end...!)

After leaving the underground mall, the heroes threw down any attacking Vertexes as they looked around Osaka as a whole.

However, as they were still unable to find any survivors, they decided to head towards their next destination.

As they leapt their way, the girls remained mostly silent. For they felt if they were to open their mouths, only dark words would spill out.

After Osaka, they headed for Nagoya.

But no longer did anyone dare say -"this time for sure".

Eventually, Wakaba and the others landed on the roof of a large building in front of Nagoya Station. From there, they were high enough to have an unbroken view of the area.

However, the sight of the town in its entirety was not much different from what they had seen so far. Collapsed buildings. Roads buried in rubble. Abandoned cars--

- "Whoa, whoa... what's that?"

Tamako grimaced as she pointed towards the station.

The area around the station and beyond was covered with countless giant egg-shaped objects.

An uncanny sight, inducing physiological unease.

Wakaba strained her eyes and focused her sight. Using her hero power to enhance her senses, she saw the egg-shaped objects clearly as if she used a telescope. She could tell something was wriggling inside each eggshell.

Wakaba had never seen such huge eggs before. But just what sort of eggs were those--

- "...!!"



Just the thought of it made Wakaba nauseous.

The egg spawning ground spread fairly far and wide.

Anzu crumbled to her knees on the spot.

- "...ugh..."

- "Are you okay, Anzu?!"

A flustered Tamako supported Anzu.

- "I'm... okay... Just a little... surprised..."

Despite her words, Anzu's face was pale as a ghost, tears streaming from her eyes.

Wakaba was painfully aware of why Anzu was so shocked.

(Is this... the ultimate fate of a land invaded by the Vertexes...?)

To have all man-made structures swept away to become the monsters' occupied territory. As if to say that the land no longer belonged to man.

- "... One day... our Shikoku... will be like this too..."

Anzu murmured in a shaky voice.

- "Tama's not gonna let that happen!"

Tamako firmly shouted as if to clear away Anzu's anxiety. Not just to calm Anzu, but perhaps to cheer herself up as well. Tamako continued with a bellow:

- "That's what we heroes are for! They may have gotten their way yesterday, but this won't happen tama-rrow! These weirdo monsters... are notta match for humans!"

Tamako's words perhaps cheering her up at least a little bit, Anzu smiled faintly.

- "I see. You're right... We have to work hard..."

Anzu wiped her tears and stood up on her own.

At that moment, Hinata let out a stern shout as she looked around.

- "Guys! We're in a tough situation here! We're surrounded...!"

Wakaba looked around from the rooftop. She could see Vertexes floating around here and there in the sky.

The monsters appeared out of nowhere, their numbers rising at a dreadful pace.

A bitter look spread across Wakaba's face as she bit her lip.



Were the Taisha incorrect in their prediction of Vertex numbers diminishing? Or did the monsters just have a tendency to multiply their numbers in such short times?

The monsters surrounded the girls in a wide, encroaching ring.

They were perhaps planning to attack all at once.

"... Now you've made Tama angry..."

Tamako glared at the Vertexes.

"I'm not gonna let you steal this world away from us! i'll do anything it takes to stop you!"

"Tamako, wait--"

Before Wakaba could stop her, Tamako had already activated a hero's trump card. She accessed the Shinju from far off Shikoku soil to draw the power of the fairy "Wanyuudou" (輪入道, the wheel monk).

The next moment, her bladed yo-yo grew gigantic. Tamako used her whole body to hurl the deadly weapon larger than herself at the Vertexes.

"Goooooooooo!!"

The giant bladed yo-yo glided through the air as the blades along its circumference spun like a chainsaw, tearing through the monsters surrounding the building. The rotating blades caught on fire, ripping and burning through the Vertexes with tremendous force.

After exterminating the midair enemies, the bladed yo-yo attacked the egg-shaped objects covering the ground.

Embued with the power of Wanyuudou, the giant bladed yo-yo burned the eerie eggs into nothingness.

"Tamako, don't use trump cards so easily like that!"

"Sorry, Wakaba. I just got pissed off all of a sudden... Well, not that I regret anything."

Using the power of the fairies is a huge burden on the hero's body. They were not entirely sure what influence the beyond-human power of the fairies would have on the human body. For that reason, the heroes were to avoid using the power of the fairies as much as possible.

Despite Tamako's in-the-moment personality, she too knew full well the risk of using trump cards. Despite that, she had to use one. She felt that unless she thoroughly crushed the sight before her eyes, her heart would be torn in two.

Not just hers-- but Anzu's heart as well.

After incinerating the Vertexes and the eggs covering the ground, Tamako returned the bladed yo-yo to herself and jumped onto it.

"Since I've already brought it out, why don't we ride this thing and take a look around Nagoya? It'd be faster to search from the sky, wouldn't it?"



-"... Yeah."

Beginning with Wakaba, all the other girls boarded the giant bladed yo-yo.

--And even in Nagoya, no survivors were found.

Since it was unthinkable they'd find survivors in the egg-covered area, the search ended quickly.

Once they returned to the building in front of the station, Tamako's bladed yo-yo returned to its normal size, perhaps due to exhaustion.

-"Ahh, it really is tough using trump cards."

Tamako sat down on the roof and breathed a sigh.

-"Please don't use them any more. We really don't know the full extent of their influence."

-"I know, I know."

Tamako answered Wakaba with a wry smile before falling silent and gazing at her bladed yo-yo pensively.

-"..."

-"What's wrong, Tamacchi-sempai?"

Anzu spoke up in concern.

Tamako snapped back to.

-"Ahh, no, it's nothing! I just spaced out for a second there. Now then... Guess we can't rest forever, eh. According to our plan, we've gotta get to Suwa before the day's done, right?"

Tamako looked at Hinata as she said that.

-"Yes, that's right, but..."

Hinata tilted her head to the side, a little concerned about the expression Tamako had on her face for a second back there.

-"Tamako-san, if you're tired, it'd be better if we rested here for-"

-"No need! Tama doesn't want to drag everyone down! Come on, let's get going. Suwa's thattaway, right?"

Interrupting Hinata's words, Tamako quickly readied herself to jump from the building's rooftop.

-"Tamacchi-sempai, wait!"

-"What, Anzu? You want to stop me too? Too bad, 'cause nobody can stop Tama!"

-"..." No, it's just that Suwa's the other way."

-"..." Oh."





Tamako blushed just a little before heading the right way to Suwa.

The girls' next destination was Suwa-- the Lake Suwa area in Nagano prefecture.

Until last year, Suwa was a bastion of human survival with a barrier like Shikoku and protected by a hero named Shiratori.

The Chuo Expressway led from Nagoya south-east to Suwa.

The asphalt of the long road connecting Nagoya, Nagano, and Tokyo had now been torn to shreds by Vertex teeth. The half-bitten wreckage of cars littered the road.

As they approached Nagano, Wakaba's heart filled with both hope and fear.

Wakaba had exchanged many words with Shiratori who was in Suwa. Though they had never met, Wakaba thought of her as a good friend.

When communications were cut last year, she was told there was a high probability that Suwa had been destroyed. But until she saw everything with her own eyes, Suwa's destruction wasn't certain. Nor was Shiratori's death.

And for that reason-- Wakaba was afraid to find out for sure.

- "You mustn't avert your eyes."

As if she had surmised Wakaba's feelings, Hinata lightly brushed her cheek.

- "I'm sure Shiratori-san wants you to know what happened to Suwa too, Wakaba-chan. No matter what happened... Because she must've seen you as a friend too."

Hinata spoke stern words with a gentle tone.

The Lake Suwa area has a four-building shrine known as the Suwa Taisha. That four-building shrine became a keystone in the formation of the barrier, protecting human survival. That said, as the Vertex attacks intensified, the barrier gradually shrank. By the time communications ceased last year, the only safe area was the south-east area near Lake Suwa.

Once the heroes reached Lake Suwa, they headed south towards the Suwa Taisha's main shrine. The Nagano townscape along the way was, like the other areas, a wreck. The barrier that had been protecting humanity was no more. An unpleasant premonition suddenly surged within Wakaba's head. They reached the main shrine.

But--

There was not much left to be called a "shrine".

The torii, the kagura hall, the shrine office, the assembly room... everything had been reduced to timber and stone rubble. As if it had personally taken on all sorts of natural disasters... Out of all the areas they had seen, this had been the most brutally destroyed. There was not a hint of the building's originally intended shape, nor was a single man-made thing remaining. And of course, there was not a person in sight.



If Vertexes merely preyed on humans, then there would've been no need for destruction this thorough. And yet the natural-born enemy destroyed everything as if to undo all traces of humans out of some personal grudge.

- "Khh...!"

A wordless groan leaked out of Wakaba's throat.

With its barrier gone, and the Vertexes having trampled everything down... the probability of finding any survivors in Suwa was exceedingly low.

But Wakaba looked up.

- "Let's search... for any survivors."

The girls split up and searched the heart of the main shrine.

As the sun began to set, staining the sky red--

Near the base of Mount Moriya, near the main shrine, they found a farm field.

Amongst all the wreckage, it was a faint trace left by man. Though it was overgrown by weeds and easy to overlook, it was certainly a field cultivated by human hands.

- "Huh...?"

Yuuna noticed something just barely jutting out from the ground beside the farm field. She rushed up to that spot and began digging. The others silently followed Yuuna's lead.

They kept digging at the soil without minding if their hands got scraped.

Eventually, the buried object was visible. It was a wooden box about as tall as a person.

- "Did someone leave this behind...?"

Wakaba gasped as she opened the lid.

What came out was... a hoe. And a folded letter.



Nice to meet you.

No, wait, Nogi-san might be the one reading this, so it'd be weird to say "nice to meet you", huh.

Then again, I haven't actually met Nogi-san in person, so I guess maybe "nice to meet you" is right after all.

Sorry. I don't know how exactly I'd go about writing this, so I ended up writing something pointlessly long.

If the one who finds this letter isn't Nogi-san, then I can just ask them to deliver it to her. Nogi Wakaba is a hero of Shikoku.

Anyway, it's been about three years already since the day the Vertexes appeared. I've somehow managed to protect Suwa, but the barrier's gradually shrinking. It's truly an urgent situation. I am a hero, so I know it's unbecoming of me to say something so timid, but Suwa probably won't hold out for much longer.

But even if Suwa meets its end, Nogi-san and the others will still be there in Shikoku.

The world may be in shambles, but judging from the history of the past, humanity has always revived itself no matter what wars or natural disasters have come our way.

So even if we're in a tough time now, I'm sure things will be fine as long as we don't give up.

Nogi Wakaba-san. My precious friend whom I've yet to meet.

I'm so glad I got to know you, even in an age like this.

I pray that you will be safe even during this war with the Vertexes.

I pray that you will be able to protect this world.

I just want humanity to be protected to the very end. Even if I'm not the one who can keep protecting it. As long as someone, a hero like you, Nogi-san, can continue to protect the world, that's fine by me. I will fulfil my part of that goal.

As long as I can.

Once this calamity has been overcome, and the time comes to cultivate and resurrect the soil of the land, I'd be happy if only this hoe could be used to help out in that endeavor.

Because it'll feel like I'm with you, cultivating the land by your side.



-"..."

Wakaba's sight blurred with tears. Her hands tightened around the letter, crumpling the paper.

Her friends, peeking at the letter over her shoulder, all found themselves at a loss for words.

Seemingly at the end of her patience, Chikage clenched her fist and bit down on her lip.

-"It's... the same here... everything's been... destroyed...!"

-"No, not everything..."

Yuuna shook her head. She took the hoe out of the wooden box that held the letter and gently cradled it in her arms as if it were a small child.

-"This was left behind. The baton Shiratori-san passed to us, I'm sure..."

Yuuna held out the hoe to Wakaba.

Wakaba took it, holding it firmly in both hands.

Heroes born in different places, but in the same age were connected here and now through that baton.

-"We... finally meet, Shiratori. I'll succeed your dying wish."

What the hero of Suwa left behind in her name was truly a glimmer of hope shining upon the dark world.

Afterwards, as Hinata searched the main shrine ground ruins for her report to the Taisha, she found several small cloth bags.

-"Are these... some kinds of seeds?"

Each bag held a different variety of fine seeds.

Anzu began recalling memories as she spoke up.

-"... These are probably soba seeds. These are daikon seeds... And these ones are... cucumber? These things are in season, huh."

A farm field, seeds, and a hoe. All were here.

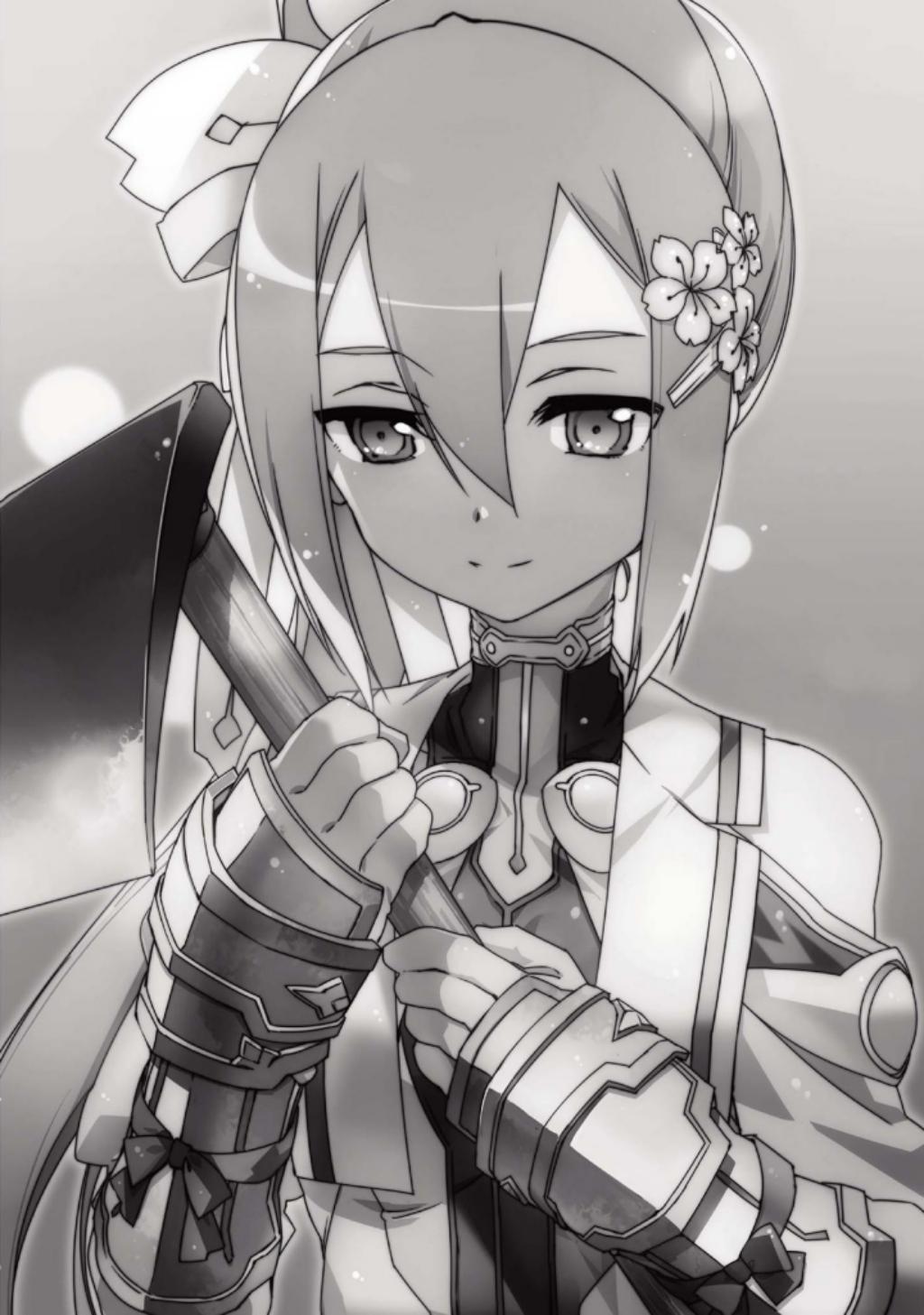
Without anyone saying a thing, the girls began to cultivate the farm field.

The sun had already set, and the girls faced the soil underneath the moonlight. Everyone pulled out weeds and alternated using Shiratori's hoe to plow through the soil.

They weren't used to the work, but nobody complained.

By the break of dawn, they had finished tilling part of the farm field.

They sowed seeds into the now soft soil.





It was unlikely that any seeds that sprouted would grow in a land swarming with Vertexes.

Nevertheless, they wanted to at least restore a little bit of what Shiratori had left behind back to how it was.

-"Let's take this hoe and the leftover seeds back to Shikoku."

Wakaba spoke in a somewhat lonely tone as they watched the morning sun illuminate the farm field.

Afterwards, the girls, tired from the long journey and the cultivation, slept for a short while beside the farm field.

After they woke up, the girls would go further on to Tokyo and the northern land...

Or at least that was the plan.

But their investigation expedition would be interrupted in an unexpected way.

As they woke up from their rest, a solemn Hinata informed them.

--Shikoku was at risk of a crisis once more.

(Chapter 11, End)